



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0023

SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

EXHIBIT IV.A.

To: Members of the State Board of Education

From: Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner*

Date: March 12, 2008

Subject: Major Capital School Construction Program; *Concept Approval Consideration*;
Portland School Department, New K-5 Elementary School Construction Project.

STATEMENT OF FACT

The Portland school project was rated number one on the 2004-2005 Approved Projects List. The project will house grades K-5, and will replace the Nathan Clifford School and the vacant Percival P. Baxter School will be demolished to make room for the new school on that site. The school will also house an additional 170 students from other Portland elementary schools.

Portland has a very diverse school population. As a result, the design of the school is somewhat different to accommodate many small groups and one-on-one instructional situations to deal with the wide range of needs of the student population. Fifty-two of the additional 170 students from Portland schools, in addition to the Nathan Clifford School population, will be children with special needs in either the Functional Life Skills program or the English Learners Program.

The school system did an outstanding job of defining Portland's needs in their Educational Specifications which guided them in both the design and configuration of educational space. Both the program and the design have been carefully reviewed by the Department of Education. A complete New vs. Renovation Study is on file with the Department of Education which supports the Department's recommendation to build a new school rather than renovate the Nathan Clifford School. All appropriate State and local agencies have been contacted; and where necessary, documented approvals are on file. The building has been designed to High Performance and LEED standards.

Superintendent Whynot-Vickers has provided the following project description statement:

The Ocean Avenue School will have a positive and constructive impact on the district. It will

- Provide an optimal learning environment for all the students of the 100-year old Nathan Clifford School while reuniting Baxter neighborhood students in a neighborhood school,
- Relieve overcrowding at neighboring schools Longfellow and Presumpscot, while opening up needed programmatic space at Riverton,
- Create a student body of socio-economic and ethnic diversity reflective of our city,
- Return ELL students to classrooms in their own neighborhood while reducing the Low SES and ELL density at Reiche School,
- Address a district need for two Functional Life Skills classes (FLS). One classroom will relieve the overcrowding of the FLS program at Hall School and one will provide suitable, handicapped accessible programmatic space for FLS students now at Reiche,
- Locate a new school centrally in the city, bordering directly on the boundaries of seven elementary neighborhood districts, thereby providing for flexibility to respond to enrollment changes in the future and permitting expansion possibilities should enrollments increase,

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- Require minimum maintenance in the first 10 years, thereby allowing our capital improvement fund in that same ten-year period to address the maintenance and renovation needs of 5 older facilities,
- Replace two aging buildings, Nathan Clifford and Baxter, providing savings through energy efficiencies and green design.

This new school significantly enhances and improves the delivery of education in the district by:

- Creating a school that more closely mirrors the demographic make-up of Portland's student population,
- Providing programmatic space for neighborhood English Language Learners and enhances the ethnic diversity of the student body,
- Providing appropriate, accessible programmatic space which better meets the needs of our most significantly disabled learners in the Functional Life Skills special education,
- Creating educational economies of scale. A school of 441 does not require itinerant specialists thereby reducing employee travel time and costs. At this size a school staff can adjust more easily to annual shifts in population,
- Providing well designed program space that allows for improved programming in art, music and physical education,
- Providing small instructional spaces to facilitate differentiation of instruction for diverse students needs,
- Providing flexible spaces that will allow us to respond to changing needs, programs and practices in the decades to come,
- Arranging learning space in two K-5 vertical teams, preserving the deep relationships characteristic of smaller schools within the structure of a larger building,
- Providing a site with increased opportunities for outdoor learning and connections to the natural environment.

In summary, this new elementary school will create a physical learning environment conducive to a positive learning environment and best practice instruction across regular and special programmatic areas. It will have a positive impact on elementary education as a whole by relieving overcrowding at two schools and improving programmatic flexibility at others. Savings achieved through energy efficiencies and reduced maintenance costs can be applied to the improvement of other aging facilities.

This Concept Approval is being requested pursuant to M.R.S.A. Title 20-A, Section 15905(1).

The Portland School Department is requesting Design and Funding Approval for a 441 pupil K-5 school qualifying under State statute and State Board of Education Rule, Chapter 61, Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects.

Project Information

Project: Ocean Avenue Elementary School

Superintendent: Jean Whynot-Vickers

Principal: Vacant

Architect: WBRC Architects and Engineers

School(s) to be closed: Nathan Clifford School. The Percival P. Baxter School will be demolished to make room for the new elementary school on that site.

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Project Budget Information

Total Project Cost: \$20,164,591

Local Only (no State participation): \$60,000

Approved for State/Local Debt Service Subsidy: \$19,630,417

Anticipated State and Federal Grants: \$474,174

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Construction Committee considered this request at its March 3, 2008, meeting. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the State Board of Education approve the exhibit and budget.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

The Commissioner recommends that the State Board of Education grant Concept Approval to Portland School Department for a 440 pupil elementary school in Portland, Maine, as a Major Capital School Construction Project and approve the concept budget as presented.**

*Prepared by the School Facilities Services Team

**This approval constitutes Concept Approval. Final Funding Approval may be subject to adjustment under Section 10, Subsection 1, of the State Board of Education Rules for School Construction Projects, which states:

"Final Funding Approval by the Commissioner establishes the Project Budget and takes place after construction bids have been received. At that time, the Commissioner may reduce the budget to finance the project, thus providing additional funds for other projects."